

SUPERBASE 10

BITBURG

Eagle Country



Chris Bennett

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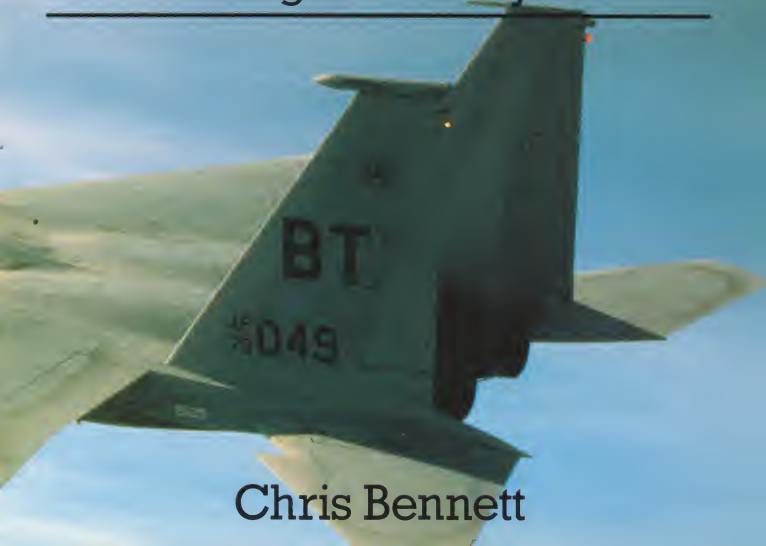
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Published in 1989 by Osprey Publishing
Limited
59 Grosvenor Street, London W1X 9DA

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British Library Cataloguing in Publication
Data

Bennett, Chris

Bitburg: Eagle Country

1. United States. Air force. Military
aircraft—illustrations

I. Title II. Series

623.74'6'0973

ISBN 0-85045-911-7
GothScans Ltd

Edited by Dennis Baldry and Tony
Holmes

Designed by Stewart Cocking

Printed in Hong Kong

Front cover Prior to departing from Bitburg on a patrol, 'Eagle One' completes the last of his preflight checks

Back cover Surrounded by its weaponry and assorted support gear, an F-15C Eagle from the 36th TFW shelters from the elements in its Tab Vee

Title pages High above the fields of Western Germany, an F-15C of the 36th Tactical Fighter Wing at Bitburg enjoys the late afternoon sun
(*Courtesy USAFE*)

to Mother and Father, with love

My thanks go out to everyone at Bitburg Air Base whose kind and friendly attitude towards this visiting stranger was gratefully received, but in particular I would like to say a hearty 'Cheers' to: Major John 'Deedle' Reed, Major Tom 'Snuf' Smith, Captain Joe 'Ricki' Accardo, Lieutenant Colonel Bill 'Tunes' Looney, Captain Mike 'Balls' Baltzer, Lieutenant Chuck 'Slapper' Wanebo, Lieutenant Cam 'Tools' McKercher, Lieutenant Jim 'Flav' Lefavor, Captain Randy 'Baballo' Riccardi, Captain Dave 'Boomer' Gerber, Captain Andy 'Grumpy' Russel, Captain Walt 'Waldo' Givhan, Captain Don Lents and thanks to Tina Corcoran of Public Affairs.

My thanks also to Introphoto (Bronica UK) Ltd and to my good friend Paul Waller of Harpers Photographic, Woking.

Superbase Bitburg was photographed with a Bronica ETRS camera fitted with Zenzanon lenses and loaded with Kodak and Fuji stock.

Right The author striking a pose in his A2 jacket from Eastman Leather (Paul Waller)



Introduction

Go ask a budding fighter pilot the top choice of aeroplane on his 'dream sheet' and the odds are that he'll reply 'F-15 Eagle'. Ask that same budding fighter jock where he'd like to fly from; the chances are that he'll reply Bitburg, Germany.

Bitburg lies within the hills and valleys of the Eifel region, an extremely attractive area twenty miles from Trier—the oldest city in West Germany.

To an outsider, Bitburg Air Base is a most impressive place. Compared to some bases Stateside it really is quite small, but Bitburg exudes an impression of professionalism and pride—pride in purpose and pride in location. 'BT' people enjoy their work and workplace and this shows in the results. Testimony to this is the awesome accumulation of awards accredited to the 36th Tactical Fighter Wing and its constituent squadrons since their transition to Bitburg in 1952. Recently, the accolade for top USAFE Squadron went to the 22nd TFS in 1987 and 1988, having belonged to the 53rd in 1986.

The 36th Tactical Fighter Wing, comprising the 22nd 'Stingers', 53rd 'Tigers' and 525th 'Bulldogs', also has a most important and prestigious peacetime mission: Zulu Alert. Four F-15s sit at the end of a high-speed taxiway, fully armed, combat capable and ready to fly and fight within five minutes of the horn sounding. Zulu at Bitburg is a 24 hours a day, 365 days a year commitment of which the base is justifiably proud. Only the very best of groundcrews and fully Mission Ready pilots get to sit Zulu; when you're dealing with this kind of live firepower there really is no room for error. Bitburg is an exciting and dynamic place and the people who work there are in no doubt that they have the 'Right Mission, Right Place, Right Now'.

With its afterburners plugged into Zone V and nearly 50,000 lb of thrust propelling it down the runway a Zulu Alert QRA (Quick Reaction Alert) F-15C departs on a scramble. The Eagle has only two selections of wing flap available, either up or down; for take-off, down is the standard setting and provides optimum lift against drag

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Eagle Interceptor

Right 36th Wing Flight (Courtesy USAFE)

Above High above the cumulus, somewhere over Western Germany, a very special four-ship Eagle flight poses for the camera ship. This formation had been set up to capture PR shots for the 36th of the 36th celebrations. In 1988, that was just how long the Fightin' 36th TFW had been at Bitburg and this four-ship flight includes one Eagle from each squadron led by the Wing Commander in his personal jet, 036 (Courtesy USAFE)









Another four-ship formation, looking resplendent in fresh paint jobs and with consecutive tailcodes, banks away over the Eifel Valley towards Bitburg one morning in August 1988
(Courtesy USAFE)





The Wing Commander leads his wingman back home in the rich sunlight of early evening after a one-on-one ACM (Air Combat Manoeuvring) exercise (Courtesy USAF)



Above With yellow stripe on his fin tip a Tiger boy of 53rd Sqn formates patiently onto an EC-135H out of Mildenhall whilst his buddy suckles some 4000 lb of fuel, flying Track Six out over the North Sea. The Eagle can carry up to 11,635 lb of fuel internally with the commonly used external centreline tank providing a further 600 gallons of capacity (*Air Portraits*)

Right Capt Mike 'Balls' Baltzer accepts fuel from the EC-135 one beautiful June afternoon in 1988. Four Tigers of 53rd Sqn had just completed one of the very last DACT (Dissimilar Air Combat Training) exercises with No 11 Sqn Lightnings out of RAF Binbrook. In two weeks No 11 Sqn were to say farewell to their tried and tested jets. 'Balls' has now returned Stateside but is still flying Eagles, this time from McChord Air Base, Washington (*Air Portraits*)







Below A Tiger jock prepares to plant his F-15 onto Bitburg's runway. The approach speed of the Eagle varies between 140 and 170 knots depending on weight and it will touch down at around 135 knots. The 53rd TFS 'Tigers' have been part of the Fightin' 36th at Bitburg since the Wing's transition there in 1982

With airbrake partially extended, a 22nd TFS 'Stinger' pilot gets in the groove on the final stages of approach. On touchdown he will hold the nose up in a 12 degree AOA (Angle of Attack) to encourage aerodynamic braking until a speed of 80 knots is achieved when the nosewheel is lowered onto the hard





Zulu Alert

Left The alarm horn is still sounding in the background as pilot and crew chief scramble to their F-15. This is a Zulu Alert departure; the crews have an absolute maximum of five minutes within which they must get to their jets, strap in, wind up engines, taxi and take off. Their mission is to scramble and intercept, identify and, if necessary, destroy any intruders that may transit the buffer zone separating West and East Germany

Below Zulu pilots mean business, no kidding. Even their colourful velcro-mounted unit identification patches are removed, both for security reasons and also to avoid any highly distracting reflections on the inside of the bubble canopy. As this Zulu Eagle driver fires up the starboard engine his crew chief removes the nosewheel safety pin. Just visible to the right of the HUD is the pilot's 'Eagle Eye'—a telescopic rifle sight used to eyeball those elusive BVR radar contacts







Above left Four Zulu Eagles wind up in their cages. Zulu Alert is the primary peacetime mission of the 36th TFW at Bitburg and fulfills USAF Bitburg's NATO QRA commitment. Zulu comprises four F-15 Eagles, poised in readiness in a purpose-built hardened facility situated just off the end of the runway and connected to it by a direct high-speed taxiway. Zulu is a 24 hours a day, 365 days of the year commitment during which the four Eagles in the Alert facility are always kept fully combat capable and armed with four AIM-7F Sparrow radar guided missiles, four AIM-9L Sidewinder heat-seeking missiles and with their 20 mm M61 cannons loaded with a full complement of 940 rounds

Below left In stall No 1 a secondary jet sits in readiness just in case a problem occurs with one of the primaries. The four Zulu jets are divided into two pairs; primary and secondary. When the horn goes all four Eagles wind up but only the primary pair will actually launch. Should there be a problem with one of these; then the secondary pair take over, otherwise they will remain at a state of immediate readiness until the launched jets have departed and verified a non-hostile situation

Above A crew chief beckons the first of the primary pair out of stall No 3; after a gap of ten seconds or so number two will follow. Fully MR (Mission Ready) pilots from all three of the resident squadrons sit Zulu once or perhaps twice a month, each shift lasting 24 hours. It can be a rather uncomfortable 24 hours with anxiety and tension running high, just waiting expectantly for that ominous horn to sound. It does, however, provide crews with an ideal opportunity to catch up on outstanding paperwork!



The crew chief gives a final check over as 525th Bulldog Eagle 062, first of the Zulu primary pair, taxis out of stall No 3. Bitburg's Zulu crews usually launch about five times a week, mostly on 'Tango' or practice scrambles since 'Alphas'—the real thing—rarely occur. The pilots and support crews, however, never really know for sure whether they are launching on a Tango or Alpha until after the scramble and every launch, therefore, is executed for real



The Zulu birds traverse a 500 foot high-speed taxiway which connects the Alert facility directly to the runway. On reaching the runway they will not stop but make an immediate departure

Zulu Alert jet 043 from the 525th Bulldog Sqn lights the pipes and goes ballistic on a Tango scramble. Thankfully, potentially hostile aircraft rarely violate West German airspace and the Alpha launches that do occasionally occur usually involve nothing more sinister than a lost and bewildered Cessna 172 driver!





ROETHER MEMORIAL
ZULU
ALERT FACILITY





Above Perfect formation line-up. Four 'Eager Eagles' from the 53rd TFS ready themselves at the 'last chance' check area for a two + two formation departure

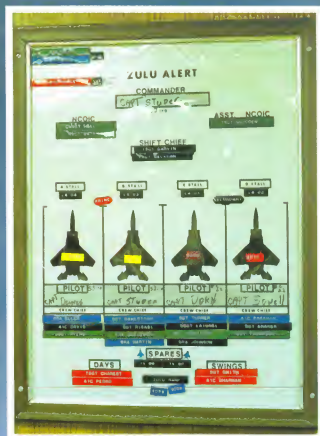


Left Zulu recharge! Within minutes of a Zulu departure the ever-efficient ground crews produce two fresh replacement jets. After installation into the stalls their respective pilots will do full engine and systems run-up checks ensuring everything is in full working order and ready to scramble whenever necessary. The Zulu Alert facility is named in remembrance of Capt Jeffrey Roether, one of two pilots from the 53rd TFS who were scrambled on 22 December 1982. Problems developed and his F-15 crashed into a mountain and he was killed. The Zulu facility was dedicated to Capt Roether in 1984 and reminds everyone at Bitburg of the deadly seriousness of the Zulu Alert mission



Main picture The 36th Wing Flight performs a gentle but tidy formation, flanked by wispy stratus clouds at an even greater altitude
(Courtesy USAFE)

Inset Zulu Alert status board with personnel and aircraft information







Left Tiger Eagle Drivers' preflight briefing. Capt Greg 'Magic' Kennedy gives the heads up to Claw Flight pilots prior to flying DACT with visiting Hahn drivers in their F-16s on 18 June 1988; briefing at 08.20 for an ETD (Estimated Time of Departure) of 10.20. Preflight briefings and post flight debriefs are an essential part of flying modern day fighters, not only for safety reasons but so that the maximum amount of information can be learned from each and every sortie flown and this knowledge can then be shared with other members of the squadron

Above Tiger domes. The new(ish) HGU-55/P helmet is preferred by most Eagle drivers due to its light weight; a distinct advantage in the high G environment of the modern fighter pilot, with a high-cut front for better visibility and cutaway back allowing better head manoeuvrability





Left With preflight briefing completed Capt Mark 'Zeke' Zechman, alias Claw 4, prepares his personal flight kit in the Life Support area before stepping to his jet. In Zeke's helmet bag, apart from the HGU 55, are his 'Eagle Eye' scope and video tape. The video tape is used to record flight information from both the HUD and radar scope. In the high speed, multi faceted environment of a dogfight, the pilot cannot possibly detect all that happens around him. Details can also be forgotten and in the debrief the VTR is used as an aid to reconstructing the fight, helping to achieve and drive home the learning objectives for that particular mission

Above With the Mack JP-8 truck in attendance, an Eagle is about to receive a top-up of 'motion lotion'. Currently Bitburg is the only USAF base using JP-8 fuel rather than JP-4, in an effort to standardize with other NATO forces

'Green Machine'

These pages and overleaf Inside the Aircraft Maintenance Hangar with a Tiger 'C' model midway through a major maintenance programme. The Eagles undergo a maintenance inspection every 100 flying hours, these varying in thoroughness and detail









Below After every 400 hours of flying time, the Pratt & Whitney F100 turbofans are removed and sent to the Jet Engine Shop for a thorough maintenance overhaul. The F100 engine develops 16,200 lb of thrust in military power and just under 25,000 lb of thrust in full Zone V afterburner. The highly efficient crews that work on the Eagle can remove an engine and install a replacement in just 20 minutes in an emergency



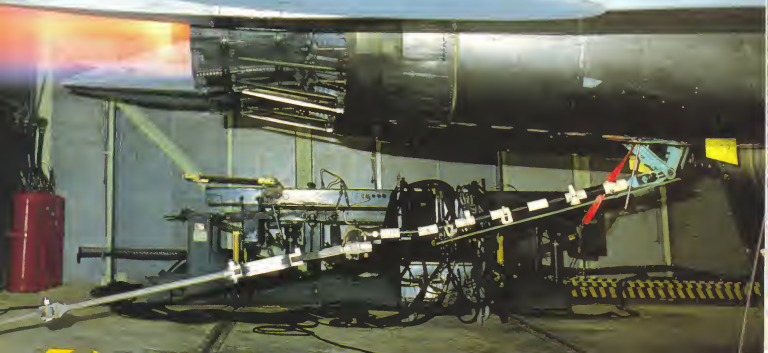
Afterburner indoors! When engine problems occur the entire aeroplane can be removed to the 'Hush House' to be rigged up to testing and diagnostic equipment in an endeavour to isolate the problem before, if necessary, sending the engine off to maintenance. Once in the Hush House, the F-15 is securely tethered down, enabling full afterburner checks to be done, albeit one engine at a time! Blast from the jet pipe is directed out of the back of the facility and slowed somewhat by baffles, but the displaced air can create a wind of up to 70 miles per hour around the rear quarters of the aeroplane



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Left Sgt Anthony Pegues consults his daunting book of words for a particularly tricky little problem

Right Airman Susan Vine is one of the ever-increasing number of female technicians employed by USAF

Below Job Done!



36th Wing Commander Col Jeff 'C-Liver' Cliver's Eagle rests in its Tab Vee (Theatre Air Base Vulnerability) hardened shelter. Traditionally Tab Vee interiors have been painted a very dark tactical grey or black, colours which do nothing to aid the relatively subdued lighting. The 36th, however, are experimenting with white interiors which have proved highly successful in producing a vastly increased ambient light, much appreciated by groundcrews







An airman replaces Col Cliver's jet 036 into its Tab Vee using a mechanical tug. A task requiring more skill than one might think: the main wheels are guided by metal rails and a momentary lapse of concentration can terminally damage the side wall of one of the Goodrich tyres



Lt Cam 'Tools' McKercher unwinds after a tough DACT sortie with F-16s from Hahn Air Base as his crew chief looks on. The Eagle drivers from Bitburg practise ACM against smaller dissimilar jets such as the F-16 and F-18 whenever possible. The Eagle is sometimes jokingly referred to as the 'flying tennis court'. Because of its large size and wing area, it is important for Eagle pilots to calibrate their eyes for small targets to avoid becoming conditioned towards seeing larger ones. F-15s from Bitburg regularly train with the 527th Aggressor Sqn who fly out of Bentwaters, England in their F-16s, giving the BT boys a real run for their money





As 'Tools' maintains a weather eye over the proceedings, his Eagle is reinstalled into a hardened shelter. In this case rather than using a tug, the aeroplane has been connected up to a winch and cable mounted at the back of the shelter. The winch is operated from a panel held over the crew chief's shoulder, whilst the jet is guided by the apparatus attached to the nosewheel



Left Staff Sergeant McGaffert doing a small cosmetic job; on this side an Eagle . . .

Above . . . and on this a Bulldog (any guesses as to which squadron?)

Right Airman 1st Class Waskan of the 36th Aircraft Generation Squadron tops up the oil supply of Col Jeff Cliver's jet. On his chest he wears a subdued version of the 36th TFW patch, with the red arrowhead symbolizing a swift weapon of defence and the silver wing emblematic of aerial protection and vigilance







It's a beautiful, tranquil June afternoon at Bitburg, and an ideal time to conduct some routine minor maintenance. The yellow hose is part of an avionics ground cooling unit used to keep down the temperatures of certain electronic sub-systems under test





Above Staff Sergeant Nelson prepares Major Tom 'Snuf' Smith's jet for flight in the subdued lighting of a hardened shelter

Left In the dim recesses of a dark-painted Tab Vee, a 53rd TFS Tiger jet prepares to taxi into the daylight. Bitburg's full complement of 72 Tab Vee hardened shelters were constructed in 1971 and have become nests for Eagles rather than haunts for the Phantoms operated by the Fightin' 36th at that time





At the end of another hard day's flying Staff Sgt Bill Edmiston puts his charge to bed in Tab Vee 'Route Pack Six'. The bulbous, but streamlined F-15 nose contains a powerfully efficient Hughes AN/APG-63 pulse-Doppler radar unit with an all-altitude, all-aspect attack capability and a maximum detection range of just over 90 nm, depending on target size, reflectivity and aspect angle. As part of the HOTAS (Hands On Throttle And Stick) philosophy that most new fighter designs logically follow, the primary radar controls are mounted on the jet's throttles allowing the pilot to stay 'heads up' during ACM, helping to avoid another fighter pilot maxim 'Lose Sight, Lose Fight'



Eagle's Talons

A little necessary tweaking to the front guidance fins of an AIM-9M infra-red guided missile prior to lifting it onto the jet



The heat-seeking missile heads on a pair of 'Nine Mikes' are given a final check over prior to uplifting them onto the jet. The AIM-9Ls and AIM 9Ms are scheduled to be replaced by a new and faster terminal IR homing missile known as ASRAAM (Advanced Short Range Air to Air Missile). Before that, however, the AIM-7F and AIM-7M SARH (Semi-Active Radar Homing) Sparrow missiles currently in use are due to be superseded by the AIM-120 AMRAAM (Advanced Medium Range Air to Air Missile) a 'fire and forget', all-weather, all-aspect BVR missile





Above A keen eye is needed for this job!

Left All together lads! With the Eagle's F100 turbofans idling, ear protection is still essential, as groundcrew upload an AIM-9L





... but with the AIM-7 Sparrow weighing in at some 500 lb, a little mechanical assistance is required. It takes the highly trained crews at Bitburg just 45 minutes to upload all eight missiles—30 less than the standard time set by the USAF. The AIM-7F can accelerate up to a maximum speed of Mach 4 depending on altitude, with a maximum range of a little over 50 nm depending on altitude and target radar reflectivity, aspect and relative speed. The Sparrow's main drawback is that unlike the new 'fire and forget' AMRAAM, it needs continuous target illumination during its entire flight time. This characteristic obviously leaves the launch aircraft dangerously vulnerable to attack from enemy fighters



Lunch break!







Sgt Andy Craig and Senior Airman Charles Navarro load up belts of 20 mm ammunition for the F-15's six barrel M61 rotary cannon. The belts are in fact stripped during the loading process as the extremely high rate of fire (up to 6000 rounds per minute) dictates the use of a special linkless feed system



Within minutes of the scrambled Eagles departing, a fully armed Zulu Alert replacement emerges under tow. The jet will be placed into one of the recently vacated stalls, and once there, fully preflighted as quickly as possible so that Zulu strength is depleted for no longer than absolutely necessary



The Boss

Eagle One is Col Jeffrey 'C-Liver' Cliver, Wing Commander of the 36th TFW at Bitburg, and the man to whom everyone answers. Col Cliver conducts a preflight walkaround of his fighter. The Colonel first joined USAF in 1965 and since then has flown fighters in many parts of the world. Col Cliver's association with the F-15 is also long-standing; he was one of the original test and evaluation pilots in 1974 and later took part in the AIMVAL/ACEVAL air-to-air missile and air combat evaluation tests. Prior to arriving at Bitburg in August 1987 as DO (Deputy Commander for Operations) the Colonel served at Soesterberg in Holland and in the States at Holloman among numerous other postings









Colonel Cliver became Bitburg's new Wing Commander on 22 January 1988 and has become a revered and much respected figurehead for the 36th TFW. His flight experience is nothing short of awesome: he has clocked up over 3700 flight hours on fighter types. Preflight walkaround successfully completed, Col Cliver steps up into the cockpit of his F-15 and settles into the high-mounted ACES II ejection seat fitted to the 'C' model Eagle. The McDonnell Douglas ACES II is a zero-zero seat capable of 'punching out' at speeds from zero to 600 knots at ground level. When the 'yellow and black' is pulled the main seat rocket ignites after 0.3 seconds, pilot/seat separation occurs after 1.3 seconds, the parachute pack opens after 2.3 seconds and full parachute inflation happens just five seconds after seat initiation during which the pilot can have sustained an acceleration of about 12 G





Left Eagle Keeper Waskan assists 'Eagle One' in the strap-up process prior to engine wind-up. The all round vision of the pilot in the F-15 is extremely good due to the high seating position of the ACES II, low cockpit sills and bubble canopy. In the air-superiority fighter game once one has closed inside visual range an unrestricted view for the 'Mark One Eyeball' becomes vitally important in maintaining SA (situational awareness), and as proven many times he who sees first wins

Above 'Eagle One' is very much 'heads down' as he completes his instrumentation checks prior to firing up number one F100 turbofan



On a wet and misty October morning Bulldog Eagle 015 taxis for the holding point



1979 vintage 068 of the 'Big 22', with wing flaps lowered, exits the holding point **en route** for BT's active runway



Fighter pilot

Left Wearing the boxing tiger patch of the 53rd TFS on his helmet visor cover a full Colonel waits as the 'Hot Pit' refuel team do their stuff

Below Capt Scott 'Doc' Horowitz of the 22nd Stingers files his post flight 'Aerospace Vehicle Flight Report' and from the contented smile on his face it seems likely that those Hahn boys took another hammering! In the upper left corner of Doc's name patch is his 'MR' pin, worn with pride by pilots once they have checked out as Mission Ready. For new jocks arriving at Bitburg this normally takes about ten check rides and once accepted as MR, apart from the initiation ceremony held in the squadron bar, this also means he will become eligible to pull the dubious pleasure of sitting Zulu Alert!





Left 'Doc' Horowitz puts some muscle under the weighty bubble canopy as one of his support crew inserts the safety bar

Right Capt Joe 'Ricki' Accardo of the 525th Bulldogs demonstrates the tricky art of donning a G suit . . .





Left . . . and harness. The F-15C is capable of loading up to nine G and under this kind of effective weight, blood from the head is forced down towards the lower body. The brain and eyes in particular need a significant amount of blood transfer to remain oxygenated and when this becomes limited or reduced due to the onset of high G the eyes are usually the first to fail. The first signs are tunnel vision which will, if G loading is maintained, merge into grey (grey out) and then to black (black out). At this point the pilot is still aware of sounds but has no vision and if he does not unload quickly is likely to pass into a totally unconscious state in what is known as a GLC (G-induced Loss of Consciousness). The G suit compensates for about two G of load and fighter jocks are also taught to perform the 'MI' and 'LI' straining manoeuvres designed to keep blood up in the head

Right Preflight checkout. Major Tom 'Snuf' Smith, one of the top dogfighters of the 22nd TFS Stingers gives his 'ship' a good look over before climbing up to start internal cockpit checks. 'Snuf', who also served in the past with the 527th Aggressor Sqn flying F-5Es from Alconbury, has removed his velcro-mounted patches; these can produce reflections on the bubble canopy, particularly irritating when checking for bogeys on the three/nine line during a fast and furious furball







Above right Lt Jim 'Flav' Lefavor, one of the Tiger Sqn's Eagle drivers, strikes a pose whilst on TDY (temporary duty) at Bentwaters airshow. Bentwaters, home of the 81st TFW, is now also home base to the 527th Aggressor Sqn—one of the prime adversaries of the BT Eagles

Below right Big Boss of the Big 22, otherwise known as Lt Col Bill 'Tunes' Looney, Sqn Commander of the 22nd TFS. Lt Col Looney, one of the most dynamic and respected leaders around, has led the Stingers on to an enviable reputation both in combat and safety . . . over 50,000 hours of accident free flying and accolade for best Sqn in USAFE command, 1987 and 1988, plus the Hughes Award for best flying unit in 1988



Left After work and at play in the Tiger bar. 'Balls' Baltzer points out a target of interest to buddy 'Tools' McKercher. Balls, who is in the author's experience a man normally possessing good taste in matters of import, appears to have slipped up this time: he's not drinking the local 'Bitburger' brew!

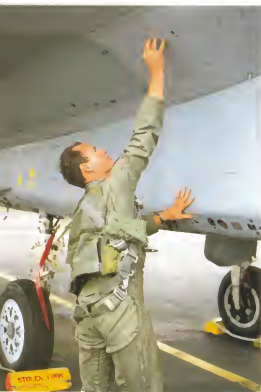


Airshow

Overleaf top Bitburg's demo pilot for 1988, Capt Randy 'Baballo' Riccardi of the Big 22, looks resplendent in his new CWU 36P flyer's jacket as he awaits the next question from a steady onslaught of interested punters and, if it wasn't questions . . .

Overleaf bottom . . . it was autographs. Fame at last!

Below Preflight walkaround



An RAF F.3 Tornado from No 65 Sqn slips by as Capt Riccardi's demo ship awaits its slot at the Bentwaters airshow of 1988 on a day with typical airshow weather; wet, windy and a cloud base doing its damndest to be intimate with Terra Firma





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01141 (10-11)



CAUTION
DO NOT
APPLY HYDRAULIC
PRESSURE TO
THIS AREA



the
Blue Max



With the roar of four Olympus engines in the distance, the Vulcan departs for its demo as the support Eagle is prepared because its slot time is approaching. Keen eyes will spot the blue tail flash indicating a 525th Bulldog jet. The support fighter was used because of a minor technical problem with Capt Riccardi's plane







Base tour

Eagle Country seen from the last
chance holding point







A profusion of Tab Vee hardened shelters from the vantage point of Bitburg's control tower



Left Meanwhile, back at BT it's taxi for the holding point







Left Interior of Bitburg Tower with Staff Sgt Kenneth Breedlove in charge of events. The pilot is termed the Supervisor of Flights: he monitors occurrences and acts as tower contact with the fighter squadrons

Overleaf Aircraft Maintenance HQ holds all the information required on the health and history of every F-15 deployed at Bitburg

Below Security at Bitburg is understandably very tight, and when entering squadron and flight areas passes must be shown, and that means everyone. Two of the security personnel take a brief pause from checking credentials; traffic through the base can be pretty heavy and they are kept on their toes



PICTURE



525









Left An F-15C Bulldog jock, head down in concentration in final pre take-off checks, waits at the last chance area for line-up clearance. His jet is armed with just one inert AIM-9 missile mounted on the inner starboard pylon which will allow the use of the seeker head during ACM training

Below A two-ship from the Stinger Sqn taxis out onto the runway for take-off. The 36th at Bitburg first received 'A' and 'B' model F-15s in 1977, this force being updated in 1981 with the arrival of more than seventy replacement single seat 'C' models and two seat 'D' models, the two seaters known as 'Tubs'. These later models also undergo periodic upgrading of avionics and weapon systems with the MSIP (Multi Stage Improvement Program)

Bottom Zulu return. A fully armed Zulu bird backtracks on the 06-24 runway after recovering from a Tango scramble







Bulldog Country

Far left Bulldog's Pride. No matter to which TFS a fighter pilot belongs, he will always possess a strong pride in, and loyalty to, HIS squadron. Capt Joe 'Ricki' Accardo, with obvious pride, points out his nomination for top dog in the Bitburg Squadron stakes. Ricki has now been posted back to the States, this time flying F-15s as instructor pilot from Tyndall AB, Florida



Above left The Bulldog's Bulldog. The much loved mascot of the 525th and 'star of the show' is Apex, Tac Call Sign 'Pexer'. Pexer joined the 525th TFS some seven years ago, making the crossing from England to Bitburg snuggled up inside a pilot's helmet bag and this particular helmet bag just happened to be in an F-15. During the journey the Eagle went supersonic and it has become the proud boast of the Bulldog jocks that they are blessed with the world's one and only supersonic British Bulldog

Below left You've just got to admit, except for the sticking plaster Apex is the spitting image of . . .





Below right Some say that the prestige of being the world's only Mach One Bulldog has gone to Pexer's head, but he hangs in there and enjoys nothing more than a good game with an otherwise unoccupied Eagle driver

Left Come Friday evening and the last Eagle has touched down; then the famous Bulldog's bar the 'Dog House' opens for business and during early evening that's definitely the place to be. Apex, however, doesn't give a damn what time of day it is, he's always keen to have yet another match of strength with one of his unusual toys. Top of the list at present is 'Mr Cone', closely followed by 'Mr Stool' (currently under repair) and 'Mr Microphone'. Like any good self-respecting British Bulldog, however, Pexer remains stubborn to the end and once a game commences the call to 'knock it off' takes effect only when he's good and ready

Top right The Bulldog's real game—but let's hope they never have to play it

Centre right On leaving Bulldog Country always check six; there might just be some crazed hound on your tail looking for a new toy







Firefight

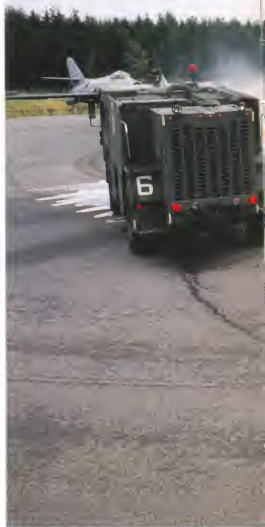
Left Because of the infrequency of the real thing, Bitburg's Fire Department usually practise their art at least once every six months in a full blown rehearsal. This involves ten vehicles, 500 gallons of JP-8 and a purpose built, life-size steel mock up of an F-15

Below The fuse . . .

Bottom . . . Ignition. Surprisingly, 500 gal of JP-8 takes some encouragement to start burning, but when it does, stand well back



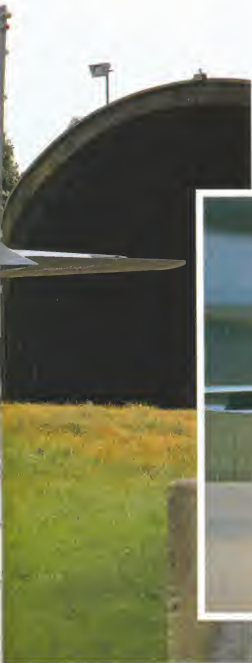
Quenched. Two of the department's P-19 Major Crash Vehicle fire trucks blast out suffocating foam, killing the fire in a matter of seconds







Border guards



Left BT 005 of 1980 vintage quietly awaits its next sortie amongst some examples of Eifel forestry

Below At the busy Bitburg holding point and with 'last chance' checks done, groundcrew pull the chocks on 026; the pilot will now line up in turn to make his departure






A Bulldog Eagle driver taxis from the holding point onto Bitburg's 8221 foot long Runway 24 for a single ship departure. The air intake ramps are controlled by the jet's air data computer and can automatically nod between angles of four degrees up and 11 down. This helps to keep the ducts pointing at the optimum angle into the local airflow during manoeuvring and thereby aids in minimizing the chances of an engine compressor stall



Final 'heads down' checks as this Stinger orientates his jet on the BT active





Below A 'D' model tub belonging to the Tiger Sqn, its rear ACES II seat unoccupied and last chance checks completed is ready to line up in turn. The two seat version of the Eagle is in fact totally combat capable but has the advantage of allowing check and orientation rides for new pilots and also on certain occasions is used for flying distinguished visitors in the back seat

Left The Tiger Tub, last to go, transits the holding point *en route* to the active . . .





Left . . . and together with 019 executes a military power two-ship formation getaway

Below The ground trembles as a Zulu jet thunders urgently down the concrete in Zone V afterburner



A two-ship of fully armed Eagles from the 525th TFS Bulldogs breaks towards their home base during August 1988. In the distance is the town of Bitburg, the tall chimney to the left of centre belonging to the infamous (to those who have tried it!) Bitburger brewery (Courtesy USAFE)





With Bitburg Air Base beneath, a four-ship of fully armed Eagles overflies the nest. The formation was specially set up to enable pictures to be produced for the 36th of the 36th celebrations in 1988. Closest to the camera ship is a 525th TFS jet with the next away being from the 53rd TFS. Farthest away are Eagle 022 from the 22nd TFS and acting flight lead, the Wing Commander's jet 036 (*Courtesy USAFE*)









Left Late one summer's afternoon this Eagle driver is about to touch down on his final approach for the day

Above and overleaf It's mid afternoon one peaceful summer's day at Bitburg and Tiger jet 025 with her maintenance completed waits for the ground cooling system to be disconnected before being retired to her Tab Vee for the night. No flying today, but tomorrow is another day







Above Capt Scott 'Doc' Horowitz prepares to dismount and, after completing necessary paperwork, will make his way to the Stinger HQ for debriefing with companion pilots belonging to the . . .

Squadron regalia

... Big 22, Last of the Red Hot Fighter Squadrons







53 Taktisches Luftwaffenfliegergeschwader



CAPT JOHN REED
"DEEDLE"

Left On arrival at Bitburg the 53rd Tiger boys receive personal wall plaques which are hung together in the squadron reception area. This one is proudly owned by one of their Top Cats, Capt (now Major) John 'Deedle' Reed

Above right This ferocious-looking beast guards the entrance to the squadron building of the 53rd TFS Tigers. The 53rd have actually adopted a pair of real tigers as Squadron mascots named 'Stars' and 'Stripes', but for obvious reasons these are in the care of Eifel Zoo

Below Tiger and Eagle—a combination which bodes ill to an unwary MiG-driver



Below right And this is the OTHER thing that Bitburg beats the world at . . . Cheers!



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Motorbooks International
Publishers & Distributors Inc.
Oxroola, Wisconsin 54020, USA

ISBN 0-85045-911-7

